



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
The Under Secretary of Commerce
for Oceans and Atmosphere
Washington, D.C. 20230

MAY 28 2019

Mr. Edward J. Saade
Chairman
Hydrographic Services Review Panel
Federal Advisory Committee
4410 Westheimer Road, No. 3202A
Houston, TX 77027

Dear Mr. Saade:

Thank you for the Hydrographic Services Review Panel (HSRP) recommendation letter, priorities matrix, and minutes, which I shared with Rear Admiral Gallaudet. I value the panel's strategic advice and recommendation, as well as your commitment to improving the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) navigation services portfolio.

I understand that the meeting actively engaged stakeholders and partners who provided several recommendations and highlighted the value of hydrographic surveying. I was pleased to learn about the discussions linking the NOAA National Ocean Service's (NOS) navigation services portfolio with the NOAA National Weather Service's (NWS) Marine, Tropical, and Tsunami Services Branch. I am told the session on sea level rise was compelling and highlighted the additional needs, requests, and requirements for the data backbone that the Center for Operational Oceanographic Products and Services (CO-OPS) and the National Geodetic Survey (NGS) provide to the Nation. I acknowledge HSRP's plan to develop issue papers and recommendations on sea level rise and emergency response activities.

I echo Rear Admiral Gallaudet's remarks that support maritime commerce as one of NOAA's major priorities in the Blue Economy Initiative. The meeting highlighted the significant loss of revenue when cargo and passenger ships are not able to enter or leave ports due to fog and other navigationally restricted visibility issues. You suggested this as an opportunity for a government-wide partnership to consider new technological responses for navigational restricted visibility through the Committee for Marine Transportation System when NOAA assumes the committee leadership in late 2019.

Improving navigation during restricted visibility would require a variety of visibility-related observations, forecasts, high-resolution shoreline mapping, and broader government-wide partnerships, as well as new technology. CO-OPS offers visibility observations through the PORTS® program and is actively investigating alternative technologies through NOAA's Small Business Innovation Research program. NWS's Coastal Weather Forecast Offices routinely issue dense fog advisories for widespread or localized fog, reducing visibility in marine areas to locally-defined thresholds not to exceed one nautical mile. In 2014, NWS partnered with NOS to provide an experimental 3-hour visibility forecast of less than one statute mile along the

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navigation channel in Tampa Bay. Discussions are underway regarding how to replicate this approach in other navigable waters through the Precision Navigation effort.

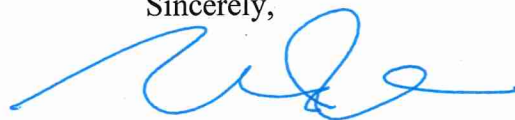
NOAA is continuing to track progress being made by the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) toward their commitment to achieve transmittal of CO-OPS PORTS® data over AIS (automatic identification system) and are providing technical assistance to the USCG as requested. NOAA will continue to keep HSRP informed of progress. We understand the concerns and recommendations made by HSRP through the issue paper and letter to ensure a sustainable PORTS® program. NOAA recognizes the substantial safety and efficiency benefits that the public private PORTS® partnership program provides the Nation and will continue to support it.

NOAA is working to establish a network of NOAA-owned continuously operating reference stations (CORS), known as Foundation CORS, to serve as the backbone of the partner NOAA CORS network and to enhance the connection of the National Spatial Reference System (NSRS) to the International Terrestrial Reference Frame. Foundation CORS are critical to the modernization of the NSRS and will create a more consistent worldwide spatial reference frame to improve forecasts of global sea level rise and inform transportation and infrastructure planning. NGS continues to develop materials and case studies on the impact of the datum changes in 2022 and hosted a Geospatial Summit in May 2019 to report out on progress and receive feedback and questions from stakeholders.

NOAA will continue to support the 3D Nation concept of modern, reliable topographic and bathymetric elevation data coverage. This effort provides a foundation for mapping our changing world by uniting terrestrial and coastal/ocean mapping efforts from the highest mountains to our deepest oceans to ensure public access to an accurate, authoritative national elevation dataset. NOAA and USGS continue to make progress on the 3D Nation study to assess business uses, mission critical activities, and benefits of having elevation data where required.

I look forward to our continuing dialogue on NOAA's hydrographic and navigation services mission.

Sincerely,



Neil A. Jacobs, Ph.D.
Assistant Secretary of Commerce for
Environmental Observation and Prediction
Performing the Duties of
Under Secretary of Commerce
for Oceans and Atmosphere

18026, HcHB

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